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**Missions in the Far East:**  
**A Traveller's Testimony.**

Speech by Mrs. ISABELLA BISHOP, F.R.G.S.,

*Honorary Fellow of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society,*

AT ST. JAMES'S HALL, MAY 11TH, 1897.

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**I**T is as a traveller, and as one in no way connected directly with missionary effort, that I have been asked to address this Meeting to-night, and I value it as a very high privilege. I have just returned from spending three years in the regions of darkness—China, Corea, and Japan, only seeing here and there, at long intervals of distance, gleams of light sent out from this and other Christian countries, but making the darkness which surrounds them the more vivid by comparison. I visited the Missions of the Church Missionary Society in many parts of China, and spent some time at the great Medical Mission in Hang-chow, as the guest of Dr. and Mrs. Main. And last year I went for a five months' journey in the far-distant province of Sze-chuan, where I visited nearly all the stations carried on by Mr. Horsburgh's Mission. In Corea, the Church Missionary Society has, as you know, no work; but there is a very great outpouring of the Holy Spirit there at this time. When I left it, in January, there was a work going on which seemed more to realize the Pentecostal days than anything I have ever seen. I also visited Japan several times, and saw something of the work under

the Bishop of South Tokio, who is on the platform to-night. Also of your work in Osaka and in Kumamoto, where the two ladies who are working there have established a leper hospital, which is not only the means of great temporal blessing, but it has been of great spiritual blessing too. I visited Ningpo also, where Mr. Hoare is doing a splendid work in the training of young men as catechists, and clergymen perhaps eventually. And I would say, in connexion with this work, that from all that I have seen now in seven years and a half of Asiatic travelling, that I think that if the nations of the East are to be evangelized, it must be by the means of Native agents. Hence the training of Native agents for native work is one of the first and most important duties of the missionary. And should the work of training be blessed, and the supply of candidates for that training be increased, possibly the day may come when the chief work of the European missionary will be the training and superintending of Native agents, who can carry the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a very different way to their own people from even the best foreign missionary. That work at Ningpo, and the women's work at Ningpo, were specially interesting.

I understand from Dr. Lankester that the Medical Mission work of the Church Missionary Society, so far as funds go, is at this time not in a flourishing condition ; and this I infinitely regret. The medical work of the Church Missionary Society is one of the noblest and best of its agencies, and the good which results from it, even in the very limited way in which it is carried on, is almost infinite. Just to take the one example of Hangchow. I have been told, and on very good authority, that there is a feeling in some minds that too much money is spent on Dr. Main's hospital. I think if those who say so saw the hospital and the work it is doing of healing both body and soul, that they would alter their opinion. It is certainly the finest hospital in the East, and it is a credit to a distinctly Christian agency such as the Church Missionary Society to be the possessor of the finest

hospital in the East. I should be sorry to see it lowered in any way. There the missionary himself, the doctor, is an evangelist, and a very earnest one. Beginning in the early morning with instructing the twenty-eight assistants and gardeners and cooks in the hospital, he goes on till half-past nine at night, doing an enormous amount of medical work, but undertaking evangelistic work also, in the preaching of Christianity in the hospital and in the dispensary to a remarkable extent. It is a wonderful hospital. By the influence of Dr. Main, a great many of the mandarins of Hang-chow, and even the Viceroy of the province himself, have been won over to some sympathy with Western civilization and to a belief in the superiority of Western medicine. I will mention one thing that I learnt in talking with the American missionaries there. They told me—several, if not all of them—that they scarcely ever met with a person interested in Christianity, or a Christian inquirer, in the villages within a radius of 150 miles from Hang-chow, who had not been brought to be interested and to inquire through the means of Dr. Main's teaching in his hospital. And I think that that is a testimony to the value of Medical Missions which ought to extinguish any doubt that exists, and ought to make those who are interested in the physical and moral healing of the world more energetic in sending out more medical missionaries. The blessing has been very great in that hospital and has radiated from it.

I went, as I mentioned, to Sze-chuan, and there saw the devoted labours of Mr. Horsburgh and those working with him, both men and women. Of course, as you know, it is a day of small things, just the beginning of work. But there were some in every station who had been brought to the knowledge of the truths of Christianity, and who were adorning the doctrine of our God and Saviour in all things. They were not at the time baptized; but since then Bishop Cassels has been through the stations, and has baptized many of them and confirmed others. And the devotion of Mr. Horsburgh to the work is unbounded. It may be possible

to criticise his methods, or to differ from some of them. But all people who see and know of his work must agree that the devotion and the self-sacrifice and the way in which he follows the Master's example, are beyond all praise. And the way in which he has succeeded in opening stations in some of the most hostile parts of China has been very remarkable. And one at least of these—the station in the large town of Miencheo—has been opened by the perseverance and self-sacrifice of two ladies (one of whom has been, to our thinking too early, called to her reward, Miss Entwistle); and by their faithful efforts the hostility of these towns has been to such an extent modified by the work they are doing, and the example they are setting, and the just and Christian lives they are living, that they were among the few missionaries who had not to fly from Sze-chuan in the riots of the year before, having got such a hold over the people that they were able to remain at their posts. But the work there is proving too much for the few workers, who are sadly suffering for the want of help.

I may mention that I was very much impressed in China—both there and everywhere—by the effect upon Chinese faces of receiving Christianity. I could almost pick from a mixed assemblage those who were Christians. There is so much brightness and cheerfulness about their faces. And there is another thing I would speak of, and that is : that in China (and I think that missionaries from China, from whom I have learnt most of what I know, would bear me out in saying so) the converts have a very great desire to preserve their churches pure. It is a remarkable thing how anxious they are for purity, and how strong they are against anything which is inconsistent. And I suppose there is no Chinese church in China in which the excesses and immoralities of the Church at Corinth, for instance, are in any way—even in the mildest form—repeated. And that says much for the training and teaching which the Chinese converts are having from the missionaries.

But there is one mistake that I may venture to speak of. It was very much emphasized by a sermon I heard last Sunday morning. The people of China—and the people of these Oriental countries generally—are not, as is often said, and was said in this sermon on Sunday morning, “athirst for God.” It is all uphill work. The creation of a feeling of sin, and a knowledge of sin, and the creation of a desire to be saved from the dominion of sin, must be the work of the missionary. And he does not find what people often think exists—the thirst after God. The thirst of the Oriental nature is for money and the good things of life almost exclusively. These meetings, which have succeeded each other so rapidly within the last week, have produced on my mind a curious impression. It is right, and most right, that those who are assisting in this great missionary work abroad, should praise and thank God for all that has been done, and especially for all that has been done in the past year. We know for certain that not a heart would have been touched among the hundreds that have been touched, if it had not been for the almighty power of God ; and therefore too much praise and too much thankfulness can scarcely be expressed. Yet, at the same time, perhaps the very praise and thankfulness which it is so right to express, do something—perhaps not a little—to blind those who come to such meetings to the actual state of the darkness in which the heathen world lies at present, in spite of all the Christian effort which has been brought to bear upon it. It is natural to bring forth the encouraging facts, and it is right to do so. And yet, at the same time, coming fresh from a darkness which may truly be felt, it seems to me as if the little points of light were shining too brightly in our estimation at home, and as if the vast area of surrounding darkness were too little taken into consideration ; and it is an awful, unrealized darkness. We know nothing of it ; we think little of it. We can scarcely take it in at all.

I travelled for fifteen months in China, and yet I feel as if I had

only in my thought and knowledge touched the very outer fringe of that darkness in which the Chinese are wrapped. The same thing in Corea. And, if you will allow me, I will just run hastily over some of the features of that darkness which occur to one as one thinks of it in the world. Among these are the fetish systems of Africa, New Guinea, and the Amur, the great philosophical systems of Hinduism and Buddhism, the nature and hero worship and scepticism of Japan, the revival of Islam in Africa and in Western and Central Asia, which must be seen to be thoroughly appreciated, and the revival of Buddhism in Japan. Buddhism has become, and is becoming more and more progressive and advancing. Then there are polygamy and polyandry, with their unspeakable degradation, and the enthronement and even deification of vice, so that many of the divinities of India are incarnations of unspeakable wickedness. And one thing that is painfully impressive is the terror which enslaves the people of the East—the terror which enslaves Corea, for instance, and great parts of China. I allude to the terror of dead ancestors, and of what they can inflict upon them, of demons, and of the forces of nature, all of which involve systems of worship and sacrifice. In Corea, for instance, people scarcely dare to stir after the sun has set, from terror of the demons who inhabit earth, air, and water. Then come horrors such as cannibalism, Arab slave stealing, and the brutality of punishments and tortures. Law itself is an engine of oppression, and justice a commodity like any other to be bought and sold, and which the working-classes are too poor to buy. And there are unbridled immoralities and superstitions and shameful political and social corruptions. And then, on the negative side, there is no public opinion penetrated by Christianity and making for righteousness to condemn wrong-doing ; and I do not think in this country we can realize what that means. Then again, there are few of the sanctities of home as we understand them. There is infanticide, too, and there is no truth, and no trust between man and man.

Then I would mention what I think is not so often brought forward in connexion with Medical Missions. I am just now mentioning the things which the Christian Church of this country and which Christian Missions have to face and vanquish in the strength of the Lord Jesus. I think it is scarcely fully recognized that every system of medicine prevailing in the East is connected with sorcery, demonolatriy, and witchcraft, not to speak of brutal and torturing treatment, and the thousands of lives annually imperilled and lost. There is a close connexion between medicine and extraordinary superstition and wickedness ; and the sorcerer is summoned on almost all occasions, or the wizard, or some prophetess, who profess openly to being in league with spirits of the other world. Sickness is supposed to be the work of demons, and the sorcerer is called in with his wand. And in comparatively enlightened Japan they believe the power of healing is connected with a divinity, and thus there is no worship more constant and continual, and no power possibly more believed in, in Japan, than that of Binzuru—the god of medicine. And, therefore, it is a necessity to send out medical missionaries, for so long as the only healer of the body is the man who is in supposed connexion with evil spirits, so long must the people remain in darkness and in the shadow of death. And I think that it is a great argument in favour of Medical Missions, that the only medical systems that these people know are systems of demonolatriy and sorcery.

And the last thing I would mention that the Church in this country has to face (and this is especially a question for women to consider) is that the final element of darkness is the influence of woman. From what I have learned—and learned often in conversation, through an interpreter, from women themselves—it is evident that the Eastern woman believes in the advantage and morality of the customs which seclude her, in the religions which deny her any future, and in the infinite superiority as well as the immortality of man. The woman in the East rules to an

extraordinary extent, and influences her family-world. She never delegates the training of her children to others, as far as I know. She stamps herself with all her prejudices and superstitions and darkness on her offspring; and she faces maternal responsibilities ungrudgingly, and from this ungrudging care of her offspring she doubtless acquires over them that influence which is fatal to them throughout their lives. We often speak of the influence of prayer at a mother's knee. What, then, must be the influence of a mother on these children as they grow up, when her whole nature is steeped in superstition and idolatry? She is the unseen and often unsuspected power, which, it is possible, does more than all else in the East to secure the absolute continuity of the false religions of the East, and tradition and custom. And to bring down, or rather to raise up, the influence of women in the East, is surely a task worthy of women in the Christian Church at home, and all the more so as it can be only accomplished by women.

Then, with all these things in view, these tremendous difficulties, we must remember that it is not only conquest that the Christian Church now, in this age, is to aim at, but it is that more difficult thing yet, namely, RECONQUEST. For we must remember that there was a time, as early as the eighth century, when from the Atlantic to the Stone of Singan Fu, in Northern China, Christianity prevailed, and North Africa, Turkey, and Persia contributed to swell the ranks of the noble army of martyrs. And it is an awful consideration that now, from the pillars of Hercules to the frontier of China, the son of the bondwoman, himself a son of Abraham, has triumphed over the son of the free, and that that vast tract of country has to be re-entered and won for the Lord Jesus Christ. In looking at all this, and especially at this last fact and the reconquest which is essential, it might well be that all who are desirous of preaching the Gospel might despair, but for the knowledge of the great power of God, and that it is with Him to make the Word effectual and with

Him to reconquer North Africa and Central Asia for His blessed Son. But still, it must be done by men and women. And it is for Him to raise them up, and for us to help by our prayers in raising them up. And there is more than that. We must be fellow-workers with God in contributing more largely—far more largely—than we have ever done before to the support of those who shall go out to fight in the great battle against the prince of the power of the air, the god of this world. But even in reference to the terrible darkness and this terrible reconquest, we have a sure word of prophecy, and we know that the son of the bondwoman shall not finally triumph over the son of the free; that the idols shall be utterly abolished; and that even the vast system of Buddhism shall ultimately perish. And we know, too, that the blood of Kucheng and Liao-yang, shed within the last three years, has not been shed in vain. And beyond that, we know that no godly, just, earnest, Christ-like life, lived quietly and humbly in the remotest corner of China, is lived in vain, and that the day will come—and must come—when “the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ,” and that in all their wide dominion there shall be no more curse, because there shall be no more sin.

But then the question comes,—What are we doing to hasten that Day? For each and all of us this is a very solemn consideration. I feel almost as if it were presumptuous in me to speak on this subject, and yet you must excuse and forgive me, because of the awful condition of those without hope in the countries in which I have spent the last three years. And the first thing that I should suggest is, more earnest and continual prayer. I think if there was one thing more than another which I have noticed in the recent meetings, it has been the prominence given to prayer by Christians for the success of the Gospel. But it does seem less easy to pray constantly than even to give constantly, and disappointment and fatigue come, and many other things enter in, to prevent that continuing in

prayer which may be the means of, we know not, how much untold blessing! One reads in the Bible of agonizing in prayer, of nights and days spent in prayer, of a yearning of intense sorrow over the ungodliness of the world. The Psalmist says, "Rivers of water run down my eyes, because of the wicked which forsake Thy law." Where with us is the spirit of Jeremiah, who exclaims, "Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain"? And where with us is the spirit of the Apostle Paul, who when he spoke of those that were enemies of the Cross of Christ, blotted the page on which he wrote with his tears? We take it all too easily, far too easily. We see the Heathen perishing, and we know they are perishing; but yet we go about our ordinary life and our avocations as though there were no such thing as perishing people, and as though we could not do infinitely more than we are doing to try to save them. Then, what are we doing abroad? I almost hesitate to bring these figures before an audience which may possibly be as well acquainted with them as I am. But it is true that in India, with 270,000,000 of our fellow-subjects, there is but one man or woman missionary to each 240,000; that in China, with its estimated population of 390,000,000 or 400,000,000, there is but one to each 300,000; and then in Central Asia, Afghanistan, Cochin China, Cambodia, much of Siam and of farther India, and in Arabia and Southern Turkey, where are our missionaries, and what are we doing? And what of South America, too, with its perishing millions? Then it is said—on good and careful authority, I believe—that in this century only three millions have been baptized, with a natural increase in the population of the world of some 200,000,000. And I hear from those connected with the societies of this country that there is a fearful paucity of men going out, that the cry is for men. There are many women offering—and woman's work is great, and the field is enormous!—but what of the paucity of men? And when I was in China,

Japan, and Corea, the cry was always the same,—“There are no men coming forward, or very few.”

Now, what is it? Is it growing Sybariticism, or is it that the prizes of the professions are more prized than before? I have come too lately home to know. But we know that in the early days of British Christianity men like Fridolf, Columbanus, and Killian went forth, each with his woollen cloak, his leather bottle, and his pilgrim staff as his sole equipment. In faith they threw themselves among the savage hosts and hordes of the Pagans of Europe, and won the Continent for Christ—from the Carpathians to the Atlantic, and from the Appenines almost to the Arctic circle. And one asks, Are the heroic days of missionary effort in this country always to be those of the sixth, ninth, and tenth centuries? Is the constraining love of Christ upon men less now than then? It is true that people have more to sacrifice in leaving home now. These men sacrificed but the blessed communings and the sweet ties of Iona, and the men who go out now have to sacrifice Church ordinances and sacred fellowships and intellectual life, and all the many things that we have been accustomed to consider our birthright. Still, the Spirit may be roused again, and the Student Volunteer Missionary Union is doubtless helping in this aim. But the fact remains that there are no armies of men coming forward as these men came forward, each going out with his company of twelve to convert Europe to Christ. And these old saints counted not their lives dear unto themselves, and thought nothing apparently of what they were leaving behind. And those who left Iona perhaps scarcely gave it a thought that they might never return to see its green shores again. And then followed two centuries of success. And surely the example of such men, and—to say it reverently—the far higher example of Him Who gave up the Throne of His Father to come and preach the Gospel on earth among sinful men, and to die for sinful men—surely such may be sufficient to urge men out, even from all that they love best, to go forth as missionaries now.

I would conclude by speaking on the subject of which I am almost ashamed to speak—that of Christian giving. The labourer is worthy of his hire, and men and women cannot go forth unless they are supported on the mission-fields, however simple and humble that support may be. I have not seen anything of missionary luxury, and I think that those who give may rest in peace on that subject. We all may be certain that the money which is raised by the Church Missionary Society and other Societies in this country goes direct to the point; and that it is not used to keep missionaries in luxury, but to enable them just to live in that amount of comfort which we all know to be necessary in the climates of the East.

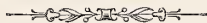
And we at home, many of us, are living in luxury; and if we could only reduce ourselves to the level of the missionaries and their simple way of living and their self-denial, we might be gaining more of the Master's approval than we at present have. It is hypocrisy to pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers into His harvest, when, though we say that the silver and the gold are His, we are keeping it back from Him, and are spending it on our own selfish luxuries. And I would not say upon luxuries only, but upon things which are pleasant to the eye, pleasant in various ways—not in themselves sinful, but just pleasant. And if we are spending money upon them, we are keeping it back from the Lord. And I think we must learn, each one of us, to ask ourselves the question—in every purchase, in every shop to which we go, "What doth God require of thee?" and "How much owest thou unto thy Lord?" We owe everything, and God requires of us much. And there are many ways—I may be forgiven perhaps for mentioning a few of them in which it seems to me, on coming home, that the style of expenditure has been raised; and especially would I mention, considering the large number of women who are here, something of the extravagance in dress. The extravagance seems to me in London this year to pass all bounds,

and how much Christian women are affected by it I know not. But sometimes, I suppose, it requires more Christian courage to wear a bonnet of three seasons ago than it would to face a flooded river, or anything else that may be dangerous. And I think it is the dread of wearing old-fashioned clothes ; of living in an unfashionable quarter, when it is possible to secure a house in a fashionable one ; to have old-fashioned and possibly tasteless furniture, when it is within our power to acquire artistic furniture which is so easily obtained ; to spend a holiday in a second-class hotel, when we could spend it in a first-class hotel ; and the aversion to the giving up of expensive floral decorations, on which fabulous sums are expended at this time ; to the modifying our desires and our fashion in equipages and appointments, so far as they are mere luxuries ; to the denying ourselves reserved seats at concerts and other entertainments ; to the self-denial as to filling our houses with objects pleasant to the eye—which are preventing us from following Christ. I mention these, because I have just come from regions where either a tent or a dark room in a Chinese hut of some village seemed sufficient luxury. People here have a superfluity of luxuries, and Christian people follow in the train of those who do not profess to follow in the self-denial of the Master. And may it not be that we are called to more self-sacrifice and self-denial than we have used or are trying to use? Can we hear of souls perishing, as they are perishing, and yet continue to use the silver and gold which we constantly say are the Lord's for other purposes—and not His? I know that reasons are given for not giving up luxuries, and I should not venture to condemn them in any way. People say that young people, growing up, must have this and that and the other, that daughters do not like to see their mothers looking dowdy, that they must have amusements and recreations and entertainments, and that it is a pity to put young people in adverse circumstances. I would only say, regarding the oft-repeated argument, that if people gave up these super-

fluties "it would be so bad for trade," that there is one word of the Master which very often occurs to me, "What is that to Thee? Follow thou Me." It may be that the way of the Cross is harder than of old, and that the steep of Calvary—which we all must climb if we are to suffer with Christ and to be glorified with Him—is more rugged than of old. I know not. But always in front passes the Master, and every step of the road of self-denial is wet with His blood. And with that example before us, and His promise to help us, surely we may deny ourselves the little luxuries and many of the little pleasures of this earthly life—for the sake of those for whom, as for us, He died, and who are still living in ignorance of Him. I would say no more on this subject, because the measure of our giving and the measure of our self-denial are questions which each one must decide for himself or herself. But I would venture to say that each one of us must seek to decide them in the light of the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as if His eye were upon us in the decision.

We have been met together now about an hour, and in that time, according to calculations which have been made, four thousand of the eight hundred millions of our race, who have not heard of the Lord Jesus Christ, have passed from this dark life into Christless graves. We cannot realize it. We cannot realize that they are passing in one mournful, ghastly, reproachful procession at the rate of eighty-three a minute, to appear before the throne of God, of the God of whom they have never heard. I can say no more. In some respects I almost feel too strongly to say anything on this subject. I only wish that all present could see that thick darkness in which these millions of our fellow-creatures live, as I have seen it, as every missionary sees it, as every one who, like Mr. Baring-Gould, has visited Missions sees it. And far beyond Missions, in outlandish regions, I have seen it, where tens of thousands live without hope for the future, knowing nothing of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. And I feel that while we have privileges beyond anything that we

could have dared to hope for, and of which we are utterly unworthy,—if we, by selfishness and self-indulgence, by want of self-denial, and want of realizing our great debt to our Lord Jesus Christ, are withholding the light, is not our culpability great? We do it easily. Does not our conscience reproach us? Will it not reproach us at some day in the future, if it does not reproach us now? In that solemn Day, when all the things that we have accumulated must be left behind, and when all the pleasures which we have enjoyed at the expense of self-denial for Christ's sake are abandoned, and when we have to go and render an account of our stewardship, it may seem a terrible thing that we should have been indifferent to this great mass of dying, dark, ignorant humanity. And may we not to-night, while hearing statements regarding the Heathen, and of our responsibility to the Heathen, hear also the voice of the Master—now crowned and glorified—ringing through ages of increasing selfishness and luxury, declaring to each of us that the measure of our love for our brethren must be nothing less than the measure of His own, for when “He took upon Himself to deliver man,” He kept nothing back from the sacrifice. May we be so inspired by the knowledge and the individual experience of that great love wherewith He loved us, that we may account no offering too precious to lay upon His altar—self, children, all—and that we may account no self-denial too great, if it can rescue one perishing soul, and make it a jewel in His Crown of Glory!



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